

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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AMCONSUL BELIZE IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L GUATEMALA 0466

EXDIS

FOR BUSHNELL FROM TODMAN

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: GT, BH, ME, PBOR
SUBJ: BELIZE: TODMAN CONVERSATIONS IN GUATEMALA JANUARY 23

1. ACCOMPANIED BY AMBASSADOR AND ARA/CEN DIRECTOR MATTHEWS,
TODMAN WAS RECEIVED JANUARY 23 BY FOREIGN MINISTER MOLINA WHO
ALSO PARTICIPATED IN LONGER SUBSEQUENT CONVERSATION WITH
PRESIDENT LAUGERUD.

2. ON THE BASIS OF HIS RECENT CONTACTS WITH PRICE,
TODMAN EXPRESSED SERIOUS DOUBT TO MOLINA THAT PRICE
WILL ACCEPT BOTH A TERRITORIAL CESSION AND THE CON-
TEMPLATED TREATY ARTICLES SPELLING OUT A CLOSE POST-
INDEPENDENCE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GUATEMALA AND BELIZE.
HE SAID IT MAY BE THAT PRICE CAN BE PERSUADED TO ACCEPT
SOME KIND OF CESSION, HOWEVER UNPALATABLE, BUT HE WILL
NOT ACCEPT ANYTHING HE SEES AS "TYING" BELIZE TO GUATEMALA.

3. MOLINA SEEMED SINCERELY TAKEN ABACK. HE SAID PRICE HIMSELF
HAD BEEN PARTY TO THE EARLIER UK-Guatemalan NEGOTIATIONS WHICH
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HAD LED TO AGREEMENT IN PRINCIPLE ON ALL PARTS OF THE TREATY
EXCEPT THE TERRITORIAL ADJUSTMENT AND TWO OTHER MINOR ARTICLES.
GUATEMALA HAD TAKEN IT FOR GRANTED THAT ALL OF THE PARTIES
ACCEPTED THE PREVIOUSLY AGREED PARTS OF THE PROPOSED SETTLEMENT.
MOLINA STATED THAT BELIZE'S "NATURAL RELATIONS" ARE WITH
GUATEMALA. THE GOG WAS PARTICULARLY INTERESTED IN THAT PART
OF THE DRAFT TREATY WHICH CALLED FOR FORMALIZED SECURITY

CONSULTATIONS. GUATEMALA IS FEARFUL OF THE VACUUM WHICH WOULD OCCUR WHEN BRITAIN WITHDRAWS AND WHICH COULD BE FILLED BY CUBA.

4. TODMAN ALSO EXPRESSED UNCERTAINTY THAT A PRE-ARRANGED MEDIATION WOULD WORK. IT MAY BE NECESSARY TO GIVE THE MEDIATOR MORE SCOPE THAN WAS EARLIER CONTEMPLATED. MOLINA DID NOT REJECT OUT OF HAND THE NOTION OF A MORE OPEN-ENDED MEDIATION PROCESS BUT STATED THAT GUATEMALA WOULD HAVE TO KNOW THE TERMS OF REFERENCE BEFORE IT COULD RENDER A CONSIDERED OPINION.

5. TODMAN STRESSED THAT THE REALITIES OF THE SITUATION WERE SUCH THAT THE ATTITUDE OF MEXICO WILL SOMEHOW HAVE TO BE TAKEN ACCOUNT OF IN A SETTLEMENT PROCESS. MOLINA RESISTED THIS IDEA, NOTING THAT MEXICO HAD GIVEN UP ITS RIGHTS IN BELIZE PURSUANT TO ITS 1893 TREATY WITH THE UK. TODMAN SAID THAT MEXICO WAS WILLING TO FOREGO ITS LATENT CLAIMS IN THE INTEREST OF SELF-DETERMINATION BUT THAT ANY NEGOTIATION, IN MEXICO'S VIEW, SHOULD BE BASED ON THAT PRINCIPLE. MEXICO, MOREOVER, PREFERRED NEGOTIATION WITHIN AN INTERNATIONAL BODY.

6. MOLINA RESPONDED THAT GOG WOULD NEVER ACCEPT MEXICAN "INTERFERENCE" AND EXPRESSED PUZZLEMENT ABOUT MEXICO'S WISHING TO INSERT ITSELF. TODMAN HOPED MOLINA WOULD THINK ABOUT SOME FORMULA ALLOWING MEXICO TO AT LEAST BE SEEN AS AN INTERESTED CONFIDENTIAL

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PARTY. (LATER MOLINA AND PRESIDENT APPEARED NOT TO OBJECT TO IDEA, BROACHED BY TODMAN, OF MEDIATOR "CONSULTING" MEXICO AS WELL AS OTHER INTERESTED PARTIES LIKE HONDURAS.)

7. IN ANY EVENT, TODMAN STRESSED, IF THERE IS NO FURTHER FLEXIBILITY IN THE GOG POSITION ON THESE MATTERS, IT IS BETTER FOR THE USG TO KNOW IT LEST WE INVOLVE OURSELVES IN AN EFFORT DOOMED FROM THE START.

8. TODMAN COVERED MUCH THE SAME GROUND WITH THE PRESIDENT, STRESSING ROWLAND'S CURRENT PESSIMISM AND NOTING TORRIJOS' EFFORTS TO BE HELPFUL IN KINGSTON.

9. PRESIDENT LAUGERUD COMMENTED THAT THE MORE TIME THAT PASSES THE HARDER THE PROBLEM WILL BE TO RESOLVE. TRADITION TO THE CONTRARY, HE HOPED HE WOULD NOT HAVE TO BEQUEATH THIS PROBLEM TO HIS SUCCESSOR -- IT SHOULDN'T BE ALLOWED TO GO ON INDEFINITELY. NEVERTHELESS, IT MUST BE UNDERSTOOD THAT GUATEMALA, IN PREPARING TO RENOUNCE ITS CLAIM TO THE VAST BULK OF BELIZEAN TERRITORY, IS MAKING THE CONCESSION. HE REAFFIRMED, ALSO, THAT IF A UNILATERAL GRANT OF INDEPENDENCE SHOULD ENSUE, GUATEMALA WOULD HAVE NO CHOICE BUT "TO REACT." THE GOG WAS

NOT CLOSE-MINDED AND COULD LOOK AGAIN AT THE TREATY PROVISIONS, BUT PRICE MUST UNDERSTAND THAT HE, LAUGERUD, MUST FACE THE GUATEMALAN PEOPLE. THE MOMENT WOULD COME WHEN GUATEMALA WOULD HAVE TO SAY THIS FAR AND NO FURTHER. MOLINA DESCRIBED THE SITUATION AS A BACKWARD STEP, A "RESHUFFLING OF THE DECK." PRICE WAS ABUSING THE GOOD FAITH BOTH OF GUATEMALA AND THE UK. HE ALSO RAISED THE QUESTION OF THE "SUBSTANTIAL DEVELOPMENT CONTRIBUTION" WHICH BRITAIN HAD EARLIER PROPOSED.

10. TODMAN ASKED THAT, BETWEEN NOW AND THE NEXT CONVERSATIONS WITH THE UK (MOLINA INDICATED THEY WERE LIKELY TO TAKE PLACE THE WEEK OF JANUARY 30), GUATEMALA REVIEW THE DRAFT TREATY PROVISIONS AND SEE IF THERE IS ANY ROOM FROM THE GUATEMALAN PERSPECTIVE FOR FLEXIBILITY. FOR OUR PART, WE WOULD URGE
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THAT PRICE DEFINE WITH PRECISION WHERE HIS OBJECTIONS TO THE DRAFT TREATY LIE. NE NOTED THAT PRICE IS SCHEDULED TO MEET WITH OWENS ON JANUARY 24.

11. IN RESPONSE TO A QUESTION ON WHETHER HE COULD GET AN AGREEMENT RATIFIED, PRESIDENT LAUGERUD DREW AN ANALOGY BETWEEN THE DIFFICULTY HE EXPECTS IN SEEKING EVENTUAL APPROVAL OF A SETTLEMENT WITH PRESIDENT CARTER'S LEGISLATIVE PROBLEMS OVER THE CANAL TREATIES. LAUGERUD CONCLUDED, HOWEVER, THAT HE FELT CONFIDENT OF HIS ABILITY TO OBTAIN APPROVAL FOR A REASONABLE SETTLEMENT.

12. FOR LONDON: PLEASE INFORM ROWLANDS AND PRICE OF THE CONTENTS OF THIS MESSAGE.

13. FOR MEXICO: PLEASE SHARE SUBSTANCE OF THIS MESSAGE WITH ROEL.
BOSTER

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